

BOOK REVIEWS

Seon-i Yi and Ja-hwang Koo. *Oykwukinul wihan hankwuk hyentaymwunhak sanchayk 'Modern Korean Literature for Foreigners.'* Seoul, Korea: Hankwukmwunhwasa, 2012. 232 pp. ₩20,000 (Paperback). ISBN: 9788968170027.

Literature is inseparable from language learning, since literary texts are invaluable resources, especially for the language learners who are eager to achieve highly advanced or superior language proficiency. As cultural competence and literacy have been emphasized as much as language competence in foreign language learning, many language educators and researchers have stressed “why” and “how” literature should be incorporated into teaching practices in a foreign language classroom (Alderson & Short, 1988; Byrnes, 2004, 2005; Carter, 1988a, 1988b; Carter & Long, 1991; Collie & Slater, 1987; Cook, 1994; Hall, 2005; Lazar, 1990, 1993; Paran, 2008; Parkinson & Reid Thomas, 2000; Short, 1996). However, not many studies have suggested “what” literary works to teach and learn—a “literary canon”—and this is the common dilemma Korean language educators face while trying to incorporate literary works into their language curricula (J.-W. Kim, 2012). In this regard, this book can be a seminal work for more systematic and vigorous research on selecting literary canon for Korean language learners.

This book was published as one of the Global Korean Studies book series for foreigners by the Center for Korean Studies at the Institute of Global Affairs of Kyunghee University in Korea. It is entirely written in Korean and consists of the following six volumes: Chinese Characters and Korean Culture, Modern Korean Culture, Korean History and Culture, Korea Today, A History of Korean Literature, and Modern Korean Literature. As implied by the titles of this series, the main purpose of this book is to provide an introductory selection of modern Korean literary works—16 poems, 14 short stories and novels, 4 essays, 4 plays, and 4 literary criticisms—to

Korean language learners/foreigners with interests in Korean literature in general.

Coauthored by Seon-i Yi and Ja-hwang Koo, Korean literature professors, this book presents a wide range of modern Korean literary works and writers selected based on theme, genre, and chronological time period, specifically beginning after the liberation of Korea from colonial rule in 1945, all the way to the 1990s. The selected works include titles such as *Sin, Tongyep* [*kkepteykinun kala*]; *Kim, Tongli* [*yekma*]; *Kim, Sungok* [*yeksa*]; *Yi, Elyeng* [*phokphowa pwunswu*]; *Hwang, Sekyeng* [*hanssi yentayki*]; *Yi, Kangpayk* [*phaswukkwun*]; *Pak, Wanse* [*haysan pakaci*]; *Co, Cenglay* [*thaypayksanmayk*]; *Pak, Kyengli* [*thoci*]; *Kim, Kyengcwu* [*men sayng*]; *O, Cenghuy* [*yeys wumwul*]; *Choy, Wensik* [*'liellicum' kwa 'motenicum'uy hoythong*], and so on. The book also contains a variety of themes such as *secenguy seykyeywa chamyeyu ene* 'world of lyric poetry and language of participation'; *inyemuy mwukeywa ilsanguy seykyey* 'weight of ideology and ordinary life'; *sahoysiuy wilyekkwa swunswusiuy kiphi* 'power of social poetry and depth of pure poetry'; *mincwung cihyangsengkwa haychey cengsin* 'people ("mincwung")-oriented and deconstructivism'; *naymyensenguy thamkwuwa sangsanguy yuyenseng* 'exploring inwardness and imagination'; *yeseng cengcheyseengkwa naymyenuy caypalkyen* 'women, identity, and rediscovering inwardness'.

Foremost, the content of this book includes a representative collection of literary works in various genres from throughout the modern period. This allows learners of Korean to experience the "big picture" of modern Korean literature. Each text is annotated to help the reader understand its socio-cultural, historical, or political background, as well as vocabulary, rhetorical/symbolic meaning, and literary terms. In this respect, the book can act as an introductory and reference book not only for Korean language learners at highly advanced to superior levels, but also for Korean language teachers whose background is not literature.

From a Korean language teacher's perspective, however, the major concerns about this book are its validity, generality, and adaptability. To begin with, the validity, or the means by which works were selected, is questionable. The authors claimed that this book is for foreigners/Korean language learners, but this is not reflected in the contents of the book. The authors did not clearly state what the selection criteria for the literary works were. Consequently, they seem to have been selected arbitrarily. Second, the generality is questionable. Many of the literary works commonly found in the middle school curriculum, or those generally known to native speakers of Korean, were not included here. These literary works would be

better introduced first, because they are strongly tied to learning the target language, culture, and literacy (J. Kim, 2009; Oh, 2010). Lastly, adaptability is questionable. This book did not put much consideration about text leveling based on the readers' Korean language proficiency (H. Kim, 2011, 2012). Unless the authors targeted this book strictly for highly advanced to superior learners; although the texts are annotated to explain some of the more advanced vocabularies, little effort was made to adapt the book to the needs of lower proficiency readers. On that account, this book would serve well not as a literary textbook in teaching Korean as a foreign language, but as a self-study reference book for highly advanced learners and language teachers.

Despite the significant attention this book deserves, there is room for improvement. The literary works listed in this book need to be reviewed to determine if they meet the most appropriate selection criteria for the Korean language learners. The selection should be derived from statistical analyses on the lists of literary works introduced in the middle/high school textbooks/syllabi in Korea, and also from the literature and language-teaching experts' consultations (J. Kim, 2009; Yoon, Yu, & Yinshu, 2014). In addition, it would have been beneficial if this book had offered language-learning tasks to develop not only the learners' linguistic and communicative skills, but also their cultural competence and critical thinking. It is important to identify such distinctive features (i.e., linguistic/socio-cultural features) of the literary works so these can be successfully exploited in the literacy lessons.

Although the authors deserve credit for producing one of the first Korean modern literature books for foreigners, it lacks any specific focus on Korean as a foreign language.

ANGELA LEE-SMITH

Angela Lee-Smith, PhD, is Senior Lecturer and Korean Language Program Coordinator in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at Yale University. She specializes in Korean language pedagogy and materials development for Korean heritage/foreign language learners. Her research interests include Korean linguistics and language pedagogy of literacy, culture, and oral proficiency.

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